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CONCEPTUALIZING THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE ON PERCEIVED VISIT VALUE TO GREEN RESORT IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Globally, going- green is a growing trend within the hotel industry. The past several decades have seen a growing awareness amongst hoteliers and investors regarding the environmental and social impacts of hotel development and operations. This conceptual paper aims to investigate the influence of environmental knowledge and perceived value on a visit to a green resort. At present, inadequate information related to environmental knowledge among guests who are considering to make a visit to a green resort has become the main impediment to both local and international marketers in developing a successful business and marketing strategies about green products or services. Thus, it is imperative to understand guests' perceived values about green resorts, especially in Malaysia. Applying desk analysis through an indepth reviews of literatures, this paper suggest there is theoretical evidence that suggest the relationship between customer environmental knowledge and their perceived values namely functional value, social value, epistemic value and emotional value. The findings of this study will provide an insight into the practices of green resort practitioners. It is feasible for green resort practitioners to promote of environmental activities to encourage the use of environmentally products and services, encouragement of the involvement of green resort guest in reuse, recycling and thus helping to preserve the environment.

Keywords: Environmental Knowledge, Perceived Value, Functional Value, Social Value, Emotional Value, Epistemic Value, Green Resorts

Introduction

Environmental issues cause grave concerns due to the increasing waste disposal, air pollution, and water pollution. As for the hospitality and tourism industry in Malaysia, these issues seem to create environmental knowledge and green awareness among the consumers. The service sector, especially the lodging industry, is one of the most promising industries in Malaysia (Awang, Ishak, Radzi & Taha, 2008). Simultaneously, the lodging industry has a considerable impact on the global economy in contributing towards a greener and more sustainable environment that will subsequently increase over time.

Malaysia is one of the earliest countries in the world that has taken a serious undertaking to protect the environment by enacting the Environment Quality Act way back in 1974 (Punitha & Rahman, 2011). Besides the introduction of new legislation to protect the environment, the Malaysian government has formed the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water to cater to the rising needs and significance of green technology towards sustainable advancement (Punitha & Rahman, 2011).

The Malaysian government is constantly seeking to ensure a balanced development between growth and environmental sustainability. The enactments of laws and regulations, incentive schemes and environmental programs such as cleaner technology and production, pollution prevention, adoption of the Environmental Management System (EMS), as well as the ISO 14000 series certification (Green Purchasing Network Malaysia, 2003) had been launched for environmental management purposes. In addition, the 2010 Budget had allocated RM1.5 billion for soft loans (with below-market rate interest) to companies that supply and use green technologies. However, it is argued that the pressure to adopt environmental management practices in the service sector is insignificant compared to the manufacturing sector (Grove, Fish, Pickett & Kangun, 1996).

The green and sustainability concept in Malaysia was introduced many years ago, but the concept only began to garner serious attention after the economic crisis in 1997. The Malaysian government started to incorporate the green and sustainability concept during the 8th and 9th Malaysia. The plans and concept were strengthened by the National Green Technology Policy 2009 (NGTP) (Borhan, Vahidi, Philips, Kuang, Kolmanovsky & Cairano, 2012; Chua & Oh, 2011). Adhering to these policies, green concepts began to be incorporated in the Malaysian tourism industry. Based on these policies and awareness, the focus on environmental issues, especially in the tourism sector, has led to the increasing number of green hotels (Hsiao, Chuang, Kuo, & Yu, 2014). Consequently, many hotels are beginning to implement various innovative methods to increase the “greenness” of their operations (Dief & Font, 2010; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007).

As the number of green products and services continue to increase in the marketplace worldwide, understanding the factors that influence tourists’ intentions to choose green hotels become increasingly crucial to both academics and practitioners. The closer the move to understand what causes individuals to pay for green products and services, the more the marketers are able to develop strategies specifically targeted to this particular group. Knowing the green profile of tourists who prefer green hotels allowed hoteliers to develop strategies specifically targeted to this segment.

The green issue in the lodging industry is becoming increasingly relevant to businesses and consumers. This is because environmental issues have garnered public concerns throughout this decade and in support of saving the earth, the global community has created eco-friendly

practices that are collectively known as green consumptions. This is largely in response to being influenced by green products, green services, green marketing, green technology and green activities. In line with the rising costs coupled with sensitive demands, and the pressure for economic, social and environmental responsibilities, lodging properties will need to respond constructively to this “green” approach (Robin, 2009). Such prevalence of awareness indicates that the green initiatives do affect not only the manufacturing industry, consumer products industry, and construction industry, but also the lodging industry.

The lodging industry has numerous motivations for going green such as to fulfil the social responsibility, governmental regulations, and economic benefits (Bohdanowicz, 2006). The lodging industry is beginning to implement a green design and construction practice that focuses on the three Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) and two Es (energy and efficiency) (Gilg, Barr & Ford, 2005). The process of going green necessitates hotels to focus on five areas such as recycling practices, energy management, waste reduction, water management, staff education, and green purchasing practices (Rahman, Reynolds, & Svaren, 2012). Engaging in green practices has significant implications on a hotel and resort in terms of cost management, market differentiation, as well as environmental protection; thus, helping to preserve the environment (Hu, Parsa & Self, 2010; Schubert, 2008). In addition, green building practices also provide healthy and comfortable indoor environment to hotel occupants including guests and employees.

The main problem in this study is inadequate of green knowledge among customers. In general, knowledge is believed to be a feature that can impact the entire phase of decision making for an individual. Correspondingly, according to Laroche, Bergeron & Forleo (2001), knowledge is recognized in consumer research as a characteristic that influences all phases in the decision process. Customers will make purchase choices based on their perceived knowledge. Green knowledge defines as a how much the customers feel related to environmental or green issues. Inadequate customers’ information and knowledge has become a tendency towards green resort. In addition, they also have a low level of understanding about the ‘green’ and the benefits of its sustainability. Basically, customers’ green knowledge will be affected by their attitude and purchase behaviour. In other words, green knowledge has been viewed as an ability of customers to identify certain concepts, symbols and behaviours that are connected to environmental problems.

Williams and Dair (2007) mention that lack of knowledge and expertise is another hindrance to implement sustainable development. According to Chen and Chai (2010), the problems of green marketing in Malaysia is due to the absence of information on green purchase intention and green behaviour of Malaysian consumers, making it difficult for local and international marketers as well as other relevant agencies to develop their business and marketing strategies. Studies done by various scholars demonstrated that the quality of the environment depends critically on the level of knowledge, attitude, values and practices of people (Schulitz & Oskamp, 1996; Mansaray & Abijoye, 1998). Likewise, Schulitz and Oskamp (1996) stressed the importance of knowledge, attitude, values and practices as the key components towards a better quality environment. It is also important for individuals to understand and concern the importance of environmental knowledge. Environmental knowledge reflects on how individuals relate, view and perceive the environmental issues and its surrounding.

Green practices objectives must be aimed at effectively reducing the environmental and social problems that arise directly or indirectly from daily hotel operations. For example, the adoption of the green management approach helps to reduce solid waste, water consumption, energy consumption, and air pollution (Butler, 2008; Carbonara, 2007; Johnson, 2009). The main

objective of this paper is to investigate the influence of environmental knowledge on hotel guests' perceived value about a green resort. The target population of the study is the resort customers who stayed at green resorts. Three green resorts in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia will be selected to represent the green resorts, namely The Frangipani Beach Resort in Langkawi, Kedah as well as The Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort and Spa, and The Holiday Inn, both located in Penang will be chosen. These three green resorts are selected because they won the ASEAN Green Hotel Award 2016-2018 at the ASEAN Tourism Forum held in Manila, Philippines. The objective of this standard is to enhance environmental-friendliness, energy conservation and to establish a professional green hotel operation, such as environmental planning, green products, human resources and environmental management, which enables the environment and the communities to benefit from a collective approach to operational professionalism.

Hence, this conceptual paper intends to fill the knowledge gap by proposing that the guests' environmental knowledge would be influential in determining their perceived visit values namely functional value, social value, epistemic value and emotional value.

Literature Review

Green resorts

The term "green" refers to any action that reduces the impact on the environment such as eco-purchasing or recycling (Han, Hsu, Lee & Sheu, 2011). Green resorts are often referred to as the pro-environmental lodging properties that implement various green practices to protect the earth such as water and energy conservation, reducing solid waste, and recycling and reusing durable service items (Green Hotel Association, 2008). Marketers in the hospitality industry are increasingly aware of the potential competitive advantage of going green. As such, they have been more proactive to take full advantage of this opportunity by developing appropriate strategies to be considered as an environmentally friendly business (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007).

The hotel industry has played an important role in improving the economy of Malaysia. However, the industry also has the potential of creating threatening conditions for the natural environment. At present, the hotel industry worldwide is becoming increasingly concerned about environmental issues. According to Bohdanowicz (2006), the hotel industry is considered a harmful sector that has 75% traits of environmental impact due to the unbalanced utilization of non-durable goods, energy, and water. At the same time, it is also susceptible to become a potential victim of climate change. The output of its operation may lead to pollution problems (air pollution from boilers, water pollution from the laundry) and increased the volume of solid waste for the local authorities.

Hotels and resorts use a considerable amount of consumer goods and non-durable goods, so the waste generated is likely to produce the most harmful impact on the natural environment. Moreover, resort customers generate at least 1kg of waste per day (Pirani & Arafat, 2014), and approximately 50 percent of the waste is recyclable. In Malaysia, 7.34 million tons of solid waste is generated annually, causing rising concerns regarding environmental issues. Hence, hotel operation is one of the main causes of harmful effects to the environment (Ramayah, Lee, & Mohamad, 2010). Therefore it is crucial to manage the environment wisely. This is in line with Shrivastava (2000) who views environmental management as a tool that can fit into a social and ecological system. Thus green practice would be a sensible approach to the tourism and hospitality industry.

Nonetheless, from a practical point of view, the green practice in the hospitality and tourism industry in Malaysia is still relatively new. Jaideo (2015) defined green as practices that protect the environment or products and services made with little environmental harm because they are produced in an environmental and eco-friendly way. Green is defined from an economic point of view by Gupta (2006) who defines “greening” as corporate environmental performance in meeting stockholders’ expectations. As for the industry itself, Green Hotels Association (2011) defines green practice as the concept to modify their operations, management, equipment, policies and practices to minimise their environmental impact, particularly in the areas of energy, water conservation, waste management and the use of consumables. This definition is appropriate for the industry here because of its comprehensiveness; it includes all operations as well as concentrating on the industry’s strategic view.

Based on the statistical report, only ten hotels have successfully fulfilled the ASEAN Green Hotel Standards 2016 so far. The 9th Malaysian plan was designed to increase the number of tourist visits to Malaysia by the year 2020. Accordingly, one of the selection factors by tourists is to find a hotel with an acceptable accommodation that will eventually affect environmental behaviour (Hsiao, Chuang, Kuo & Yu, 2014). As the importance of environmental issues in Malaysia continues to take precedence, numerous studies on consumers’ green purchasing behaviour were conducted. Customer behaviour is a study about how individuals make decisions to spend their money, time and effort for the consumption of products and services. Green behaviour is a controversial and complex subject which has increased the attention of scholars from various fields of studies in the past three decades.

Numerous studies have been conducted in the area of the green hospitality industry in terms of perception and the green practices of the operation. In terms of perception, many studies have been conducted on the perception of the managers towards environmental management (Kirk, 1998; Prayag et al., 2010) and perception of tourists on the green operation (Kelly et al., 2007; Sasicha Sukkay, 2012). Several studies on this topic have focused on the description of; (i) the management of environmental practices in green hotels (Shen and Wan, 2001; Hung and Lai, 2006), (ii) the reasons visitors choose to stay in a green hotel (Yeh et al., 2003; Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007), and (iii) the green practices that visitors seek when choosing between green hotels (Kung and Tseng, 2004; Chan and Ho, 2006; Park, 2009). Whereas studies on green approaches of operators are abundant such as the studies conducted by Scanlon, (2007), Oreja et al. (2012) and Imran Rahman et al. (2012).

However, previous authors have paid insignificant attention to the influence of environmental knowledge on hotel guests’ perceived value about a green resort. In the context of a growing number of consumers who seek ‘green’ alternatives, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) found that the environmentally friendly practices of green hotels could provide them with a competitive advantage. In particular, understanding the determinants of consumers’ green intention can help hotel managers in developing effective marketing strategies that increase the green hotel choice in Malaysia. Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) stated that an individual is more likely to undertake a certain behaviour if s/he has a positive attitude about the behaviour. Attitudes of environmental concern as rooted in a person’s concept of self are the degree to which an individual perceives him or herself to be an integral part of the natural environment (Lee, Hsu, Han, & Kim, 2010). So, in this paper, the green resort will be highlighted as a destination that will be able to create a valuable memory and create a wonderful experience for the customers.

Environmental knowledge

Knowledge or beliefs are referred to as characteristics that influence all phases in the decision process (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). In regards to how knowledge affects consumers' ecological behaviours, findings have been contrary to the available literature. In most cases, knowledge is found to be significantly related to how consumers gather, organize, and evaluate products (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Environmental knowledge is defined as the state of an individual's understanding of an issue which will in turn significantly impact upon his or her decision-making process (Nik Abdul Rashid, 2009). Environmental factors play a critical part in the development of opinions and attitudes. The most pervasive is the influence of the social environment: family, friends, neighborhood, place of work, or school. People usually adjust their attitudes to conform to those that are most prevalent in the social groups to which they belong.

D'Souza, Taghian and Lamb (2006) declared that environmental knowledge evolves in two forms. First, consumers need to be educated to understand the impacts of a product on the environment; and second, consumers' knowledge of how the product itself is being produced in an environmentally friendly way. Their study claimed that consumers seek knowledge and evidence through a multitude of ways, which include reading the product label. Therefore, if the consumer has the knowledge about the environmental issues, then, their awareness level would increase and thus would, potentially, promote favourable attitudes towards the green products.

According to Kaplan (1991), the state of one's knowledge about an issue significantly influences one's decision making regarding that issue. Research has examined various factors such as environmental knowledge, sociodemographic, and culture-based attitudes on the ability to understand and evaluate the impact of society on the ecosystem (Tilikidou 2007;; Laroche et al. 2002). Each of the studies above led to positive behavioral action towards the environment. Several studies (e.g. Haron, Paim, and Yahaya 2005; Lee and Moscardo 2005) have shown that knowledge about the environment generally motivates ecologically and environmentally responsible consumer behavior in disparate parts of the world.

Kim and Chung (2011) have found that individuals' past experiences that contributed to the individuals' knowledge on organic products have significant impacts on the purchase intentions for organic products. Despite the differences that may exist between organic personal care products and other green products, it was argued that similar values could shape consumers' behaviours on all of these green products. For this study, Chan and Lau (2000) definition of Environmental Knowledge appears the most appropriate: the amount of knowledge a person has regarding environmental issues. This definition is appropriate here because of its varying assumptions concerning how important knowledge is in predicting behavior. There are some who assume that the increase in knowledge concerning a particular behavior will lead to changes in behavior.

Several studies supported the assumption that consumers' environmental knowledge or eco-literacy is a significant predictor of environmentally friendly behaviour (Chan, 1998). Chan and Lau (2000) used ecological knowledge as one of their independent variables to predict the green purchase behavior in China. The results showed that Chinese people with more ecological knowledge had stronger intention to be involved in green purchasing. Abdul Wahid, Rahbar and Tan (2011) found that environmental knowledge had a significant influence on the green purchase behaviour of Penang green volunteers.

In consumer research, knowledge is considered as an important factor that influences all the phases of the decision process and how consumers evaluate products and services (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Murray & Schlacter, 1990). As for environmental knowledge, Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro (2001) defined it as the respondent's ability to identify or define a number of ecologically-related symbols, concepts and behaviours. Besides this general knowledge of consumers' rudimentary understanding of environmental issues, Darnall, Pointing, & Vazques (2012) suggested another type of environmental knowledge which is action-based. It included an awareness of consequences of individuals' actions on the environment and of the remedies that can improve behaviour (Hines et al., 1987).

Based on their review of related literature on hospitality marketing, Yoo, Lee, and Bai (2011), and Line and Runyan (2012) stated that as customers' needs continuously change and develop, understanding customer concern and knowledge have become a key success factor in highly competitive environments like the hospitality industry. Environmental knowledge will receive constant attention for future research in the hospitality and lodging industry, but these authors agreed that there is still an opportunity for hospitality scholars to contribute to the influential factors that in this area.

Perceived value of green resort visit

In marketing, the literature reveals that perceived value is always considered to be of paramount importance when customers purchase a product or service. Perceived value is considered as one of the most important concepts for understanding consumers in the service industry. Perceived value refers to previous experiences of different types of services, together with the imaginary experiences, which has an impact on the current and future value-in-context experiences of the customers. It has been found to be a significant predictor of customers' satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Cronin et al., 2000). Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived value as the customers' overall assessment of the utility of product and service based on what is received and what is given.

In a study of the hotel industry by Nasution and Mavodo (2008), it was argued that value should be perceived as a process of interpreting how the customers feel towards the product or the service that is being delivered to them, as opposed to what they sacrificed, generally in term of the price or time. Monroe (1990, p.46) also clarified that perceived value as "*tradeoff between the quality or benefits they perceive in the product relative to the sacrifice they perceive by paying the price*". Therefore, customer value would be created when the product or services exceed their expectation. Thus, Komppula (2005), pointed out that there are two perceived values in this context namely the perceived value before service delivery and during the service delivery. Therefore, creating values in the hotel industry relies on a number of aspects, these include quality of rooms, the atmosphere of the hotel, meals quality as well the conditions of the recreation and sports facilities. In all, the value is a combination of tangibles and intangibles, and it can differ from individual to individual. As mentioned in Nasution & Mavodo (2008), some customers may consider a service to be of high value while others may not value the sacrifice made to acquire the service.

The literature had brought about different dimensions of value. These included five dimensions of values developed by Sheth et al., (1991) which were: functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value; and conditional value. Further, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a multi-dimensional scale inclusive of functional (i.e., economic and quality), emotional, and social dimensions. Jamal et al. (2011) also used a multi-dimensional scale to examine perceived value among tourists using homestays. The scale developed by Jamal et al.

(2011) included dimensions of functional (i.e., price and establishment), experiential (i.e., activity, culture, knowledge, and hotel guests interaction), and emotional values. They postulated that these values are the crucial factors underlying and influencing market choice behavior. This conceptual paper adopt a functional value by Sheth et. al and applies only four basic consumption values (functional value, social value, emotional value and epistemic value) because the conditional value occurs when product's utility depends on a particular situation or circumstances under which the product is purchased. So, means that the conditional is not appropriate to apply in green resort concept. The researcher suggested that four basic consumption values (functional value, social value, emotional value and epistemic value) which are expected to influence the environmental knowledge of the hotel guests' perceived value about a green resort.

Functional value is explained as the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity for functional, utilitarian, or physical performance that reflects the quality of the physical outcome of using a product or service on a series of salient attributes such as price, reliability, and durability (Sheth et al., 1991). The functional value is seen to be the key influence on consumer choices. In the hospitality industry, the functional value is important because it is seen as a primary driver of consumer choice (Williams & Soutar, 2005). The front desk can offer functional value through convenience, contacts, speed, efficiency, and administrative help (Christiansen, 1990).

In the studies by Sweeney (1996), Soutar (2009), and Wang (2004), it was claimed that the functional value was one of the most important values where the value was introduced using two elements of functional quality, which are price and value. However, with regards to the evidence, each of these elements needs to be measured separately. Other studies have shown that the way consumers perceive the products is an important prerequisite in purchasing the product. Othman (1998) maintained that 41% of the consumers had refused to purchase green products due to the low perceived value of such products. The high prices and the undesirability of the green products had also been reported as the reason for their low acceptance in different markets. On the other hand, when conservative behaviours are rivalled by personal interests, most of the time, the personal interests will be more preferred.

In a green resort, green practices such as using non-toxic materials, displacing plastic utensils with glassware, or presenting organic food will improve the quality of the environment and provide customers with improved air quality; eco-friendly linens have advantages for allergy sufferers. These are critically conducive for customers to have a safer and healthier experience (Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2011; Lee, Han, & Willson, 2011). Overall convenience in services (food, accommodation, recreations and relaxation) also play a major role in the main functions of a green resort.

Social value is the utility derived from the product's ability to enhance social self-concept (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Wang et al., 2004). Social value plays a significant role in the formation of the tourists' perceptions of their experience (Morgan et al., 2010; Williams & Soutar, 2000). In tourism, a few researchers related social value to direct social interactions. Friendliness and hospitality, respectful treatment, genuine care for customers, and willingness to help are factors that can create social value for tourists (Noypayak, 2009). This auto-expression emotion of the customers' desire to exhibit their environmental consciousness and expect public recognition is perceived as a status-enhancing benefit (Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010). Green resorts belong to the high-end product and service category in Malaysia, and its target group is within the favourable economic foundation. Green customers distinguish themselves from the ordinary tourists through their social status showed during the

vacation. They also achieve psychological satisfaction while winning the admiration of others. Moreover, green customers pay much attention to interactions with their relatives and friends when consuming green resort products and services in order to improve each other's relationship. Making new friends during a vacation and meeting interesting people also contribute to promoting a positive impact on the customers' intention to visit.

Sheth et al. (1991) defined emotional value as the perceived utility acquired by consuming an alternative as a result of its ability to arouse affective states including specific feelings such as comfort, security, excitement, anger, romance, passion, fear, and guilt. Mattsson (1991) highlighted the emotional value which focused on the feelings of the consumers. There are several types of goods and services that are associated with emotions, and many of us have certainly acknowledged the widespread exploitation of feelings in advertising, as many companies have manipulated the associations aroused by feelings of comfort in their marketing strategies. Furthermore, the emotional value represents the psychological and emotional outcomes of the selection of a product or service and the ability of the product/service to provoke emotional responses and create attractive situations for consumers. Thus, the product/service is frequently associated with emotional responses

Green consumption is compatible with the conservation of the natural environment; it usually generates positive feelings (Corall, Bonnes, Tapia, Fraijo, Frias, & Carrus, 2009). In an eco-friendly context such as a green resort, emotional benefits such as altruism or intrinsic motivation of well-being had proven to be better predictors of eco-friendly activities including recycling and green consumerism (Barber, 2012; Griskevicius et al., 2010). In addition, hotel guests who had seen the green certification as a sign of quality would be more likely to choose or even pay a higher price for it (Millar & Baloglu, 2011). Customers may be motivated by the feel good factor such as a feeling of satisfaction about having made a purchase that was good for the environment. They may be feeling joyful, excited, pleasantly surprised, and calmness during their stay at a green resort.

Epistemic value relates to the surprise or novelty aspect of a product and offers a novelty or satisfies a desire for knowledge, and it may be important for a consumer's new experiences (Sheth et al., 1991a). Epistemic value is one of the core benefits expected from the tourism experience (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Experiencing new and different lifestyles and sociocultural environments, meeting new people, trying new food, increasing knowledge, and learning and discovering are among the strongest tourists' motivations (Andreu, Kozak, Avci, & Cifter, 2006; Kim, Noh, & Jogaratnam, 2007). In addition to the needs associated with the consumer's knowledge of a product/service, it can also affect the selection of a product/service as the selection and adoption of new product/service is subjected to the compatibility of the perceived conditional features of the new product/service. In these situations, it is most likely that the consumers search potential information related to the new product/service. They may deliberately search information that is unnecessary in the current situation but turns out to be highly valuable for the future. In a green research context, the epistemic value can be claimed as a customer's desire for knowledge and experience of a new and different lifestyle with the green concept to meet new people, trying a green product and service, and learning and discovering the green resorts facilities.

In the hotel industry, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) claimed that customers with ecological concerns prefer to make eco-friendly purchases. Millar and Baloglu (2009) stated that if potential hotel guests perform eco-friendly activities at home, their level of endurance with involvement in green practices would be high. Han, Hsu, & Sheu (2010) also indicated that customers who conducted more eco-friendly activities were more likely to choose green hotels.

Values are typically conceptualised as important life goals or standards that serve as guiding principles in life (Rokeach, 1973). As such, they may provide a basis for the formation of attitudes and act as guidelines for behaviour. Accordingly, people consider implications of behavioural choices for the things they value. Values may play an important role in environmental problems that often arise from conflict between individual and collective interests (Axelrod, 1994; Karp, 1996). Pro-environmental behaviour may also arise from values that transcend self-interest.

Several studies depicted that values contribute to the explanation of various environmental attitudes and behaviours. The value scales from Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1994) were successfully used for explaining general environmental concern (Schultz & Zelezny, 1999) and more specific environmental attitudes and beliefs (Stern & Dietz, 1994; Stern, Dietz, & Guagnano, 1995). Karp (1996) demonstrated that Schwarz's values were significantly correlated to various self-reported behaviours such as recycling behaviour, consumer behaviour, and political behaviours to protect the environment.

Other studies showed that values are related to recycling behaviour (Dunlap, Grieneeks, & Rokeach, 1983) and to people's willingness to take action to protect the environment (Stern & Dietz, 1994). In a recent study, Stern, Dietz, Kalof and Guagnano, (1999) depicted that values significantly contributed to the explanation of activist as well as various non-activist environmental behaviours such as consumer behaviour, policy acceptance, and environmental citizenship.

In addition, the influence of environmental knowledge on hotel guests' perceived value about a green resort is studied. In this case, a distinction is made between support for government regulation, hospitality and tourism industry, and support for market strategies aimed at managing environmental problems. As such, both can be characterised as measures of pro-environmental intent.

Conceptual model

Based on the indepth review of the literature, a conceptual framework can be developed which signify the possibility to investigate the influence of environmental knowledge on perceived value. Specifically the model depicts the relationship between an independent variable and four dependent variables (see Figure 1). The independent variable is environmental knowledge, and the four dependent variables are functional value, social value, emotional value and epistemic value. In this case, the framework depicts the influence of environmental knowledge on perceived value of the green resort visit.

Independent variable

Dependent variable

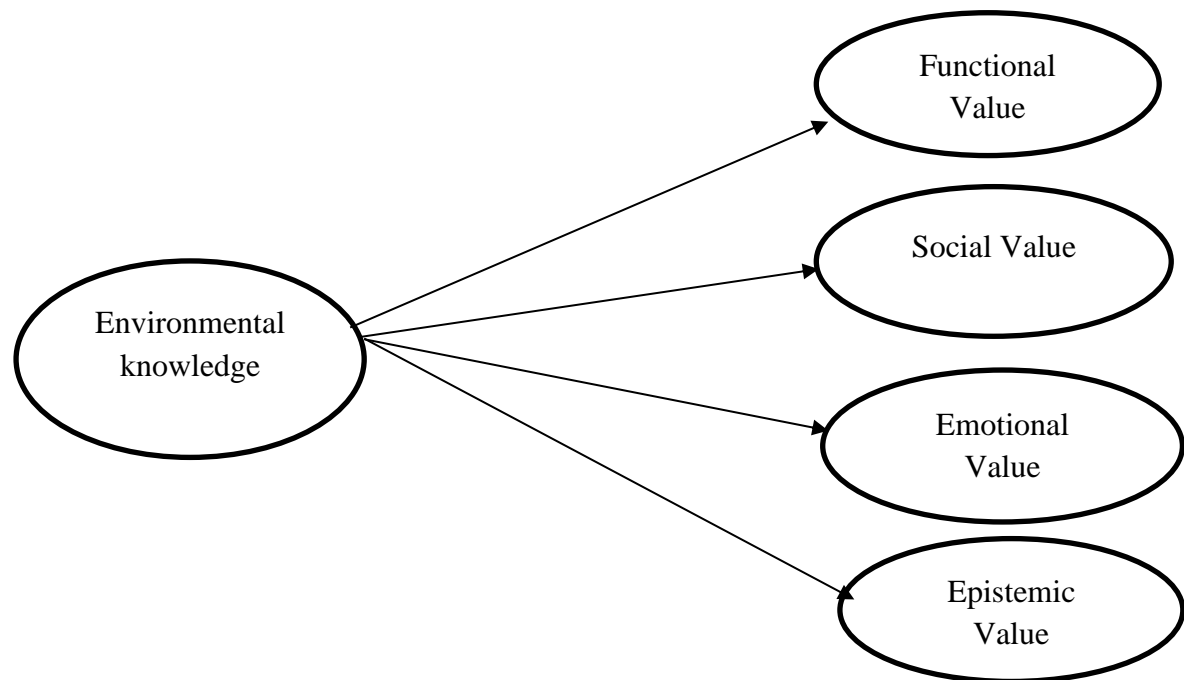


Figure 1: The conceptual model of the influence of environmental knowledge on perceived values of a green resort visit.

Methodology

The methodological approach of this conceptual paper is desk analysis through an extensive review of past literature. This covers the broader discussion about green resort definition and green practices to the focus discussions about environmental knowledge and perceived values. Consequently, the conceptual framework was developed and proposed.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper enriches the literature by providing evidence of the importance of environmental knowledge in influencing perceived value dimensions to visit green resorts. It is expected that environmental knowledge will have positive influences on a visit to a green resort because knowledge is considered as an important factor that influences all the phases of the decision process and how consumers evaluate products and services.

This paper intends to extend the conceptual framework and investigate a green resort environment. A green resort is deemed to be suitable to test the model as the industry has become one of the most competitive in the service industry. Its competitiveness has therefore forced the green resorts to find ways to attract new customers and retain existing ones by implement the strategy to build awareness and eduaquate knowledge such as Environmentally Friendly Campaign, Green Leaf Pogram and Go Green Campaign. Through this campaign, customers will increase the level of motivational and commitment towards environmental issues.

This paper is expected to contribute to extending knowledge on four key dimensions (functional value, social value, epistemic value and emotional value) related to the perceived value to encourage customer intention to visit green resorts. This research will benefit practitioners in the hotel industry by assisting managers to understand what attracts guests resort to visit a green resort. By understanding these issues, resort managers will be better equipped to develop targeted marketing strategies to attract potential guests. For resort operations, it is very important to properly define customer value, because perceived value is crucial to encourage customers' recommendation of services to friends, relatives and others.

A theoretical advancement in the field of service marketing and the hospitality and tourism industry can be established by empirically testing the proposed model to ascertain the influence of environmental knowledge on perceived value about the visit to green resort.

This paper has explored environmental knowledge about the perceived value of a visit to a green resort which can benefit resort managers in designing thematic green concept, planning marketing strategies, and targeting consumer recognition. For resort operators, this study suggests that if owners would like to attract tourists, the tourists' experience is surely critical for developing service blueprints to meet the needs and wants of customers. Hence, they should pay more attention to understanding what the tourists experienced when they visit green resorts.

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